



SURVEY OF THEOLOGY PROPER

What is God Like?

Grace Institute - Pastor Jim C. Davis

Lecture Nine: The Sovereign Plan of God (Dr. Harry Leafe's notes)

- 1A. Definition of the Decree of the God (Sovereign Plan)
- 1B. "His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (Westminster Shorter Catechism)
- 2B. "God has a plan (Acts 15:18)
which is all inclusive (Eph. 1:11),
which He controls (Ps. 135:6)
which includes but does not involve Him in evil (Prov. 16:4) and
which ultimately is for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:14). – Ryrie p. 43)
- 3B. The decree of God has reference to the works of God and does not pertain to His essential Being (i.e., He did not decree to be holy and righteous, etc.). Yet even though the decree pertains primarily to the acts of God Himself, it is not limited to these, but also takes into account and includes the thoughts, choices, and actions of His creatures.
- 4B. Though the decree of God by its very nature is but a single act of God, it is helpful at times to speak of it in the plural as we seek to better understand its outworking. Also, we must see that the decrees are not described in the Scriptures in the abstract apart from actual experience, but are put before us in terms of their historical realization.
- 5B. "A distinction must be made between the decree and its execution. God's so ordering the universe that man will pursue a certain course of action, is also quite a different thing from His commanding him to do so. The decrees are not addressed to man, and are not the nature of a statute law; neither do they impose compulsion or obligation on the wills of men." (Berkhof, Systematic Theology p. 103)

- 6B. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man form for many an antinomy – where there is apparent contradiction between inferences of principles that seem to be equally necessary and reasonable. Antinomies in the Bible, however, consist only of apparent contradictions, not ultimate ones.
- 7B. The sovereign plan of God differs from fatalism in that it has an established end and includes the means to that end. That is, the decree includes not only the various issues of human life, but also the human actions which are logically prior to, and are destined to bring about, the results. Example: It was absolutely certain that all those who were in the vessel with Paul (Acts 27) were to be saved, but it was equally certain that, in order to secure this end, the sailors had to remain aboard (27:31).
- 8B. God allows us to participate in the accomplishment of His good pleasure. To do so requires that we, through obedience to the Scriptures, employ the means which God has ordained to that end (e.g. “walk in the Spirit,” “preach the word,” “pray without ceasing,” “do not be taken captive,” etc.). Based on a firm belief in the fact that, according to the divine decrees, success (from God’s viewpoint) will be our reward of toil, we should not only sense the obligation to, but be diligent in using God’s appointed means in accomplishing His appointed ends – both of which are embodied in His Word.

2A. Terms

- 1B. “The WILL of God” Counsel to Eternal Decrees (Elements of the Sovereign Plan of God)
- 1C. boule, boulema boulomai: it means counsel, purpose, determination, will, decree. It refers to the decree or plan in general (Acts 2:23; 4:28; Heb. 6:17; 2 Peter 3:9)
- 2C. thelema, thelo: it means desire or choice. When used in relationship to God, it expresses divine volition and/r directives. We are instructed to live our lives within the sphere of those divine directives (The Bible) (Eph. 1:1,11; Rom. 1:10; 12:2)
- 3C. eudokia: it means good pleasure or good will, and refers to that which issues from accomplishments within the sphere of the divine directives. (Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 1:15; 2:13)



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- 2B. “Purpose”: prosthesis: it means a predetermination or purpose (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:28; 9:11,17).
- 3B. “Election”: ekloge, eklego, eklegomai, eklektos: It means to pick out, select or choose. Regarding salvation, it is God’s unconditional and pre-temporal choice of those individuals whom He would save (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet 1:1-2).
- 4B. “Foreknowledge” prognosis: it means prior knowledge, or to know beforehand. (Acts 2:23; I Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 3:17). When used of people it has the thought of “distinguishing affection beforehand.” Cf. the usage of “know” as it reflects relationship: (Gen. 4:1; Matt 1:25; 7:23). Also, the relationships that God established pre-temporally with those whom He would save (Rom. 8:29; 11:2). Take note of its use with Christ in I Peter 1:20.
- 5B. “Predestined”/”Appointed”
- 1C. proorizo: it means to limit or make out beforehand; to design definitively beforehand. (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5,11)
- 2C. tasso: it means to set with design in a certain arrangement or position; therefore, to appoint (Matt. 28:16; Acts 28:23; 13:48; I Peter 2:8).

(This lesson is taken from Dr. Harry Leafe’s notes in Theology 101. Dr. Leafe was a former Professor at College of Biblical Studies)